

FEBRUARY 11, 2000

SCHAKOWSKY CALLS FOR PROGRESS ON HOLOCAUST-ERA RESTITUTION PROCESS DURING BANKING COMMITTEE HEARING

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) earlier this week participated in two days of hearings before the House Banking Committee on the Holocaust-era assets restitution process.

Deputy Treasury Secretary Stuart Eizenstat; World Jewish Congress Secretary General Rabbi Israel Singer; Avraham Hirschson, Chairman, Knesset Committee for the Return of Jewish Property; former Secretary of State and Chairman of the International Commission on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims Lawrence Eagleburger and others testified before the committee. The issues discussed included the latest developments on negotiations dealing with financial settlements on slave and forced labor, unpaid insurance policies, Swiss bank accounts and artwork taken by the Nazis.

Schakowsky raised many issues during the hearings. Among them is her concern over the length of time Holocaust survivors and families of victims have had to wait to receive some measure of compensation for their suffering. In addition, she questioned witnesses about the refusal of several major insurance companies to make available to the public files containing the names of policyholders with potential claims.

Schakowsky will continue to closely monitor the process and plans to stay in close contact with all those involved in the negotiations.

Below is Schakowsky's opening statement before the Banking Committee. **STATEMENT OF U.S. REPRESENTATIVE JAN SCHAKOWSKY (D-IL)**

HOUSE BANKING COMMITTEE

FEBRUARY 9, 2000

"Mr. Chairman, I first want to thank you and to commend you for convening this hearing and on your continuing leadership on this important issue. You understand the importance of commemorating the Holocaust and in seeking to provide, when possible, some restitution for those who suffered during this tragic period in our history."

"As you know, members of Congress have a responsibility to address this issue fairly and completely for our constituents, for those who periled by the hands of the Nazi regime and for the survivors and for humanity. I have a particular responsibility since the district I represent includes Skokie, Illinois, home to numerous aging Holocaust survivors and family members of victims."

"As we are all profoundly aware, victims and survivors of the Holocaust were robbed of much more than art, insurance policies, bank accounts, property and other material and financial assets. Millions lost their lives. Countless others were brutalized, enslaved, raped and deprived the opportunity to observe their religion. Additionally, those who lived to tell the gruesome tales of the holocaust era from a first hand perspective were robbed of their childhood and livelihood. They had their family history and their whole world stripped away."

"We cannot even attempt to repay them for the suffering and the loss. What we can do is honor holocaust victims and survivors by never allowing our children to forget what happened and by denouncing in the strongest of terms, rhetoric and behavior that is tainted with the reminiscence of the Nazi era. This necessity is, unfortunately, made all the more evident by recent developments in the government of Austria and elsewhere. We must also make every effort to provide as much financial and material restitution to those who are entitled to them in a timely manner."

"I want to thank the distinguished individuals who are here to testify and to commend them and the many organizations working for justice in the name of those who have suffered as a result of the Holocaust. We have witnessed some progress with Holocaust restitution issues as well as some obstacles. I appreciate this opportunity to discuss the current details of negotiations and the status of efforts to return assets to the rightful recipients."

"I am honored to be here with all of you today and I look forward to your testimony. Thank you, Mr. Chairman."